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VOLUME 1 — NO. 4 MONTANA FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT APRIL, 1966

Frank Dunkle—Director of the Montana Fish and Game Department.

Director's Column

During April the Montana Fish and Game Commission set tentative closing dates and bag limits for this fall's big game season. These recommendations have been mailed out to the many sportsmen's clubs in Montana, and Department people are getting ready to meet with the various organizations to discuss the forthcoming seasons.

On May 23 the Commission will set these dates and bag limits in their final form. This information will then go on our big game maps. Special seasons information for moose, sheep, goats, and antelope has gone to the printers and will be available in about six weeks.

Recommendations for the 1966 season include fewer two-deer seasons. In a number of these one deer may be a mule deer and the second must be a whitetail.

Our harvest on deer this past year dropped about 17,000, but the number of hunters for the same period dropped about 4,000.

The Land & Water Conservation Fund Act

What Is It?

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act was effected through federal legislation September 3, 1964. This act set up the machinery for the collection of money which is specifically earmarked for planning, acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities. None of the money is to be used for maintenance.

Money for the fund is collected from the sale of recreation permits which allow access to some 7,000 federal recreation areas including National Parks and many federally developed campgrounds. Revenue also comes from the sale of some surplus government property, and from a national motorboat fuel tax.

How Is The Money Apportioned to States?

Sixty percent of the land and water conservation fund goes to the states and 40% goes to the several federal agencies with important outdoor recreation responsibilities for land acquisition. This includes the National Park Service, Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, and U.S. Forest Service.

Of the 60% that goes to states, two fifths is divided equally among the states, and the remainder is distributed on the basis of recreation needs. Needs are determined through statewide outdoor recreation plans which must be approved by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

Who Administers the Fund?

On the federal level, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, which is under the Department of Interior, is the administrating agency. The BOR has offices in Washington, D.C. and also has regional offices. The regional office which works with Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Alaska is located in Seattle.

The Montana Fish and Game Department is the agency responsible for administering the act in Montana. The governor proclaimed the Fish and Game Department as the primary recreation agency, and the 1964-65 legislature gave the department prime responsibility for carrying out functions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund program in Montana.

Who May Participate In The Program?

During 1966, 50% of the monies allotted to Montana under the program is available to state agencies, and the other 50% apportioned to counties and municipalities. The agencies who share in the funds must match the funds on a 50-50 basis.

How Much Money is Available for Montana?

For the two first years Montana has been alloted $1,069,000.00. It is estimated that an average apportionment per year for Montana will be near $1,000,000.00. Money appropriated for individual states will be redistributed among the other states if not matched and used within two years following the year in which it became available.

What Projects Will Qualify Under the Program?

Nearly any kind of legitimate outdoor recreation will be considered under Montana's outdoor recreation program. This would include swimming areas, ski areas, camp and picnic facilities, city parks, golf courses, boat launching facilities, etc. Projects will be considered on a priority basis. Priorities will take into account: needs of urban populations, availability of other recreational facilities, benefit to general public (however, consideration shall be given to needs of handicapped, aged, and under-privileged), enhancement or preservation of natural beauty. Other factors are also considered.

How Is Application Made For Participation In The Program?

Application must be made through the Montana Fish and Game Department. The extent of grants per year will, of course, be determined by funds received from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

Upon request from the Fish and Game Department, prospective applicants will be sent application forms. A separate application form is required for each project proposed. Among other items to be noted on the application will be: a full description of the project, including size and anticipated usage; cost of the project; and nature and extent of surrounding recreational facilities.

The Fish and Game Department will charge participants 3% of the project budget as a surcharge for each project in order to defray administrative costs. Revenue from fish and game license sales will not be used in other than fish and game department projects.

Project Proposal

If project applications meet the approval of the Fish and Game Commission, a project proposal is forwarded to the BOR Regional office in Seattle, Wash. With regional approval, proposals go to Washington, D. C. offices where the final approval or disapproval is made.

Payment for projects may be made at the time of project completion, or partial payments may be made at various stages of project development. The Fish and Game Department has final responsibility for seeing that the projects are completed in accordance with specifications written into the project proposals. Once a project is completed, the participating agency has responsibility for operation and maintenance.

CANYON FERRY RESERVOIR

Canyon Ferry Reservoir is located on the Missouri River in west central Montana some 18 miles east of Helena. The reservoir varies from one to four miles in width and has a length of approximately 25 miles. Fluctuation of the water level during the recreation seasons averages from three to five feet, making the reservoir very favorable for all types of water recreation. The reservoir is located just east of the Big Belt Mountains and has excellent scenery.

The State Parks Section assumed administration of the recreational aspects of the reservoir shortly after the completion of the dam in 1954. Since that time several areas suitable to camping and picnicking have been developed at a number of locations around the reservoir. In addition, a number of cabin sites have been made available to the public on a lease basis.

In relation to Montana's population centers, Canyon Ferry is very well located. It is estimated that 35 percent of the total population of the state of Montana lies within a one-hundred mile radius. U.S. Highway 12 on the west side of the reservoir carries heavy tourist traffic between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks during the travel season. This brings a considerable number of visitors to Canyon Ferry from other states.

The body of water formed by Canyon Ferry Dam is the prime resource of the area. The reservoir offers scenic beauty as well as tangible use of swimming, boating and fishing. The use of the area is very interesting and has been increasing in large numbers over the past five or six years. In 1960 it is estimated that the visitor use at Canyon Ferry was approximately 100,000. In 1965 the use is estimated at 140,000 and could very well reach 150,000 in the 1966 season. The largest number of visitors are Montana residents, probably somewhere in the neighborhood of 80 to 85%. These visitors are mostly from Lewis and Clark county, Cascade, Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties. Yellowstone county, although located some distance away, accounts for about five percent of total Montana visitor usage.

Fishing is by far the most popular activity among the visitors at Canyon Ferry. Most visitors, however, do not come to the lake to engage in one type of activity only. Most parties will combine a picnic with other activities such as fishing, boating, swimming, or camping. Water skiing is growing in popularity each year.

Because of the constantly increasing demand for recreational facilities, improvements at Canyon Ferry Reservoir are being made each year. New and better roads are constructed, boat launching facilities developed and camping and picnicking areas have been improved.

Sunshine, sand and water are the ingredients for a relaxing day on Canyon Ferry Reservoir. When water levels are stable, the reservoir offers a variety of recreational possibilities.

Through the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act the Parks Section has planned a $65,000 improvement project for the 1966 season. Two new camping and picnicking areas will be developed. Existing campgrounds will be improved, two new boat ramps will be added, parking areas will be defined and improvements will be made to the interior roads.

Montanan Gets National Conservation Award

Donald F. Aldrich of Missoula has been selected to receive an American Motors 1966 Conservation Award. Aldrich is one of seven men and three women picked from the nation to receive one of the non-professional awards.

The awards, initiated in 1953 to emphasize the need for conserving the nation's natural resources, are presented annually to individuals and groups for outstanding efforts in various areas of conservation. Winners will receive a bronze sculptured medallion designed by Robert Weinman, noted sculptor.

Aldrich has long been a key figure among conservationists in Montana and other western states. He has held all major offices and committee chairmanships in the Western Montana Fish and Game Association, largest sportsmen's organization in the intermountain region, and will assume the presidency of the Montana Wildlife Federation this year.

Don Aldrich

Tim Vaughn (L.), biologist for the Washington Water Power Co., and Joe Houston place eyed fish eggs in a man-made spawning bed.

THEY CALL IT "HOUSTON'S HATCHERY"

One of the nagging problems associated with large reservoirs is the lack of adequate spawning areas to provide sports fish for the large bodies of water. The problem is further complicated by the fact that reservoirs are much more favorable to reproduction and survival of fish species which are not held in favor by fishermen. Many reservoirs must be stocked excessively each year in order to provide sports fishing.

The fisheries division is trying a system of what might be termed "partial artificial propagation" as an aid for an ailing reservoir. Fisheries workers have dubbed the project "Houston's Hatchery" in reference to amicable Joe Houston who initiated the project.

Basically, the program involves man-made plants of eyed fish eggs in man-made spawning beds, and nature is left to do the rest. Houston has prepared the following report on the program which is being tried out at Noxon Rapids.

Species of trout that require running water for reproduction have not established good year-to-year spawning runs in Noxon Rapids Reservoir. An experimental hatching channel is being developed to try to overcome some of the obstacles against the buildup of a good continual spawning run. Some of the natural and man-made obstacles limiting spawning success are: access to spawning streams, high water during spawning, high silt content of stream bottoms and muddy spring flows, intermittant stream flows during the fall and winter, and water too cold for proper development of trout eggs.

Many Noxon Rapids tributaries are blocked to spring-spawning trout by the spring drawdown of the reservoir. Both Vermillion River and Prospect Creek may be blocked by impassable box canyons during high water. During the fall and winter some streams dry up with trout eggs buried in the gravel. Graves Creek, since 1961, has dried up each year after brown trout have spawned. This has killed all the eggs and in some cases the adult fish too. Many of the streams have large amounts of silt in the gravel or have muddy flows that deposit silt over the eggs and kills them.

Low stream temperatures slow down the development of trout eggs. In fact, kokanee eggs are killed by water temperatures lower than 35°F during certain stages of their development. Brown trout eggs laid in Prospect Creek take about 160 days to hatch and for the fry to emerge. In comparison spring-spawned eggs take about 30 to 40 days to hatch and emerge. The longer the time required to hatch the greater the possibility of egg or fry mortalities. In Noxon Rapids tributaries fry from both fall and spring spawned eggs emerge from the gravel before or during high water. High water can cause significant fry mortalities.

In the summer of 1965 the Washington Water Power Company leased a series of spring-fed ponds located on the R. Wilkinson property along Prospect Creek. The springs feeding the ponds flow at a constant rate of 1.7 cfs and maintain temperatures of 44-50° year around. The water is clear with little silt or debris. These ponds, with development and experimenting, should be well suited

to hatching trout eggs with little mortality. The company and the Montana Fish and Game Department cleaned out two ponds and built two hatching channels in the summer of 1965. Trout eggs will be planted here, hatched, and released into Prospect Creek in alternate years starting in 1966 and extending through 1970.

In January 1966, 600,000 eyed eggs were planted in the two artificial channels. As with any new program, problems arose that were not anticipated. Egg and fry mortalities were much greater than expected in one of the two gravel beds. Of the eggs planted, about 60 percent hatched. Of these, it is anticipated that about 240,000 fry will be released into Prospect Creek. Even with the high mortalities this phase can be termed successful since similar numbers of eggs deposited in the creek would have suffered 75 percent or more mortality.

A reduction in hatching mortality will not guarantee a successful program. To be a success, fish hatched in the channel will have to drift into the reservoir in large enough numbers to provide some angling and enough must survive to return to Prospect Creek and spawn. Whether living conditions in the reservoir will allow this survival is yet to be seen.

The ultimate success of the program will be determined between now and 1972. If about 600 adult female fish from the egg-plant of 1966 return to spawn in any one year and if several thousand others are caught by anglers through the years then this experimental program can be termed successful.

Nels Thoreson

Nelson Retires – Thoreson Takes Reins

Perry Nelson, supervisor of the Fish and Game Department's district 4 since July 1 of 1965 retired his position with the department May 1. Perry suffered two severe injuries during his service with the department and retired under industrial disability.

Perry has been with the department since 1953. He worked both with the Information and Education Division, and with the fisheries division as district biologist before becoming a district supervisor.

Taking the reins of district 4 supervisorship will be Nels Thoreson. Nels is also a long-time employee of the Fish and Game Department. He has been with the department in various capacities of fisheries management since 1949. Immediately prior to his appointment as district supervisor, Nels was district 4 fisheries biologist.

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